



Alagnak

Aniakchak

Katmai

Kenai Fjords

Lake Clark

Visitor Use- Katmai NPP

Status and Trends

Over the last seven years the number of visitor use days reported by CUA operators (Commercial Use Authorization, i.e. vendors transporting visitors to parks) has vacillated between 25,000 and 27,000 per year. Visitation patterns are affected not only by sport fishing and bear viewing opportunities but also national events. The national economic downturn in late 2008 affected the visitor use in Katmai for the 2009 season. Visitation for Brooks Camp dropped by almost 2,000 visitor use days, and took three years to recover (Fig. 1).

More detailed review of the specific locations for Katmai NPP show Hallo Bay, Geographic Harbor, Kukak Bay, and Swikshak Lagoon as being some of the most visited locations on the coast of Katmai (Fig. 1). These coastal areas receive over 5,000 visitor use days per year (Fig. 1). Visitation to the other areas in the interior of Katmai and to the Preserve seems to vary more between the years. This probably is due to the change in the strength and timing of salmon runs over different years, and bears usage at these streams providing varying trout fishing and bear viewing opportunities.

Most of the visitation for Katmai National Park and Preserve happens in July and August. About 72% of the visitor use days occur in these two months (Fig. 2). July visitation seems to continue growing (over 10,000 visitor use days in 2013), whereas visitation in June, July and September is declining or flat over the 2007-2013 period (Fig. 2).

Looking only at the most current year, 2013, provides a snapshot of where the visitation occurs in each month. Brooks is extremely busy in July when the bear use of Brooks River is at its peak, and much less in the other months (Fig. 3). Moraine Creek (in the Preserve) has a very high use in August, (with over 2,000 visitor use days), and only 400-500 visitor use days in July and Septem-

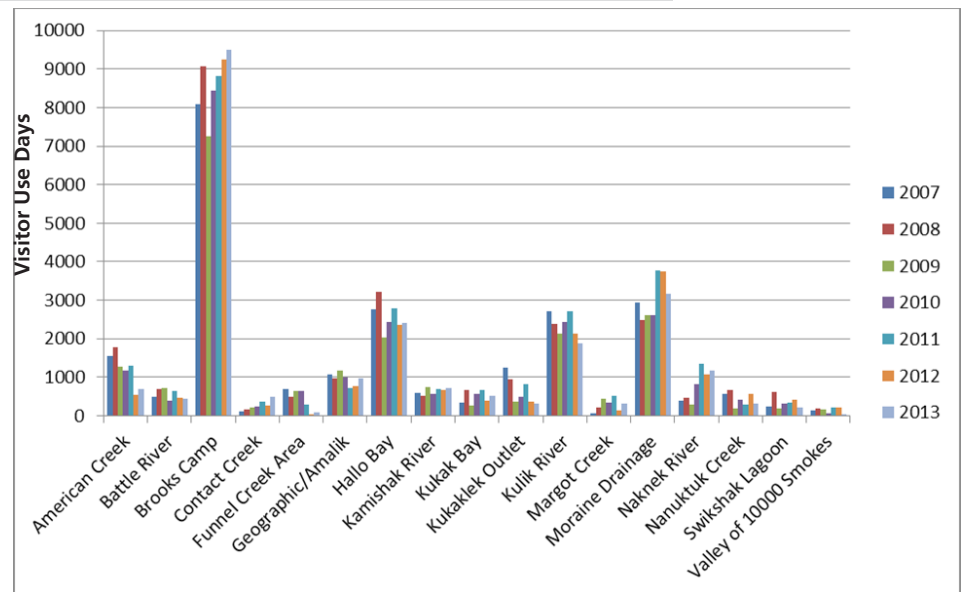


Figure 1. Total Visitor Use Days by Location (2007-2013) for some of the most visited locations in Katmai National Park and Preserve as reported by the commercial use operators. Data from the Katmai National Park & Preserve CUA database 03/20/14.

ber (Fig. 3). Hallo Bay on the coast has more consistent bear viewing visitation across the summer season by comparison (Fig. 3).

The main three activities reported by the commercial operators are sport fishing, bear viewing, and air taxi (Fig. 4). These three categories are not mutually exclusive, namely many of the CUA operators report only one activity, where the visitors themselves are focused on both sport fishing and bear viewing. Most of the use reported as 'Air Taxi' is going to Brooks Camp – where people focus on bear viewing as well as sport fishing. Reported other activities, such as big game tranporters, hiking tours, photography etc., continue to make up a very small percentage of visitor use days in Katmai National Park and Preserve (Fig. 4).



Importance

Understanding visitor use patterns across the parks and across the years lets the park managers assess where rangers and staff need to be deployed, and where impacts (such as trampling or increase in social trails) may need to be monitored or mitigated in the future. Likewise, visitor use patterns may also inform commercial operators by providing insights to the areas visited currently and the timing of visits – details which are helpful when planning guiding operations.

Because these remote Alaska park units do not have entrance stations, these data collected from commercial service providers is the primary means to quantify and understand visitation patterns and public uses in these vast backcountry areas.

Photo: Four planes tied up in a small lake in Katmai Preserve, while visitors sport fish and bear view in the stream in the background. July 2013.

Visitors to the Park

Visitors to Katmai NPP have a choice of numerous permitted CUA operators who offer a variety of services within the park and preserve. Visitors may also choose to come to the park utilizing their own plane or boat; however, aside from the people who live or in or near the park, this is much

less common. The vast majority of visitors to Katmai National Park and Preserve utilize a lodge, guiding service, or air taxi operator. The commercial operators pay a small fee for each visitor they bring to the park, and report their usage in the park. This information provides a view of where, how and

when the majority of visitors are coming to Katmai. These data are compiled through the CUA reports from each operator.

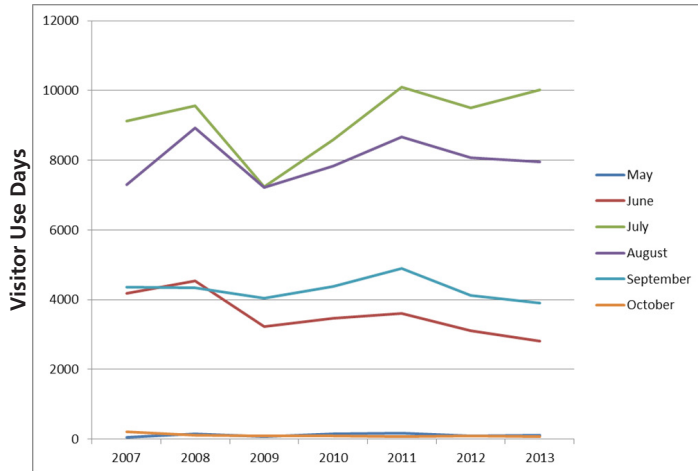


Figure 2. The number of visitor use days for May thru October for 2007 – 2013 for Katmai National Park and Preserve. Data from the Katmai National Park & Preserve CUA database 03/20/14.

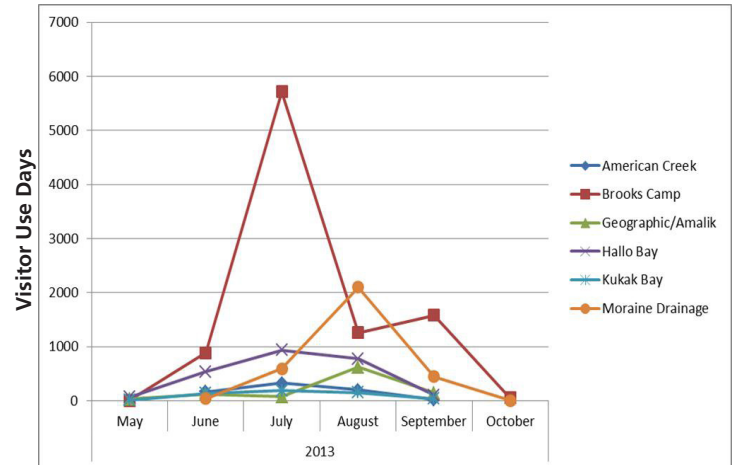


Figure 3. Use patterns across the season for 2013 for some of the most frequently visited locations in Katmai National Park and Preserve. Data from the Katmai National Park & Preserve CUA database 03/20/14.

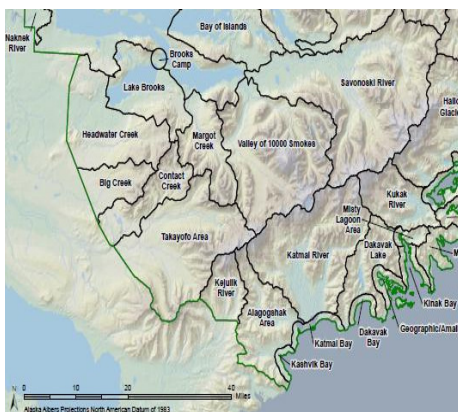
User Days & Locations Defined

In these cases the number of reported ‘User Days’ are slightly more than the number of actual visitors to the park, since visitors who spend several days in the park will counted each day they are in the park. This definition of ‘User Day’ provides the

best information of the potential impacts by location across the park. These broad trends and overall patterns of use across the summer and across locations provide park managers with the information needed to assess potential impacts.

Each park unit is divided into areas (see map), roughly corresponding to watersheds in each park unit. Areas with concentrated use have been sub-divided into smaller areas. When reporting, CUA operators choose the area of the visitors’ main activity.

Locations in the Parks



Katmai NP&P and the Alagnak Wild River combined have been divided into 60 different use areas, a portion of which are represented. The CUA operators (Commercial Use Authorized operators) report their use in these areas annually, the number of visitors and their main activity.

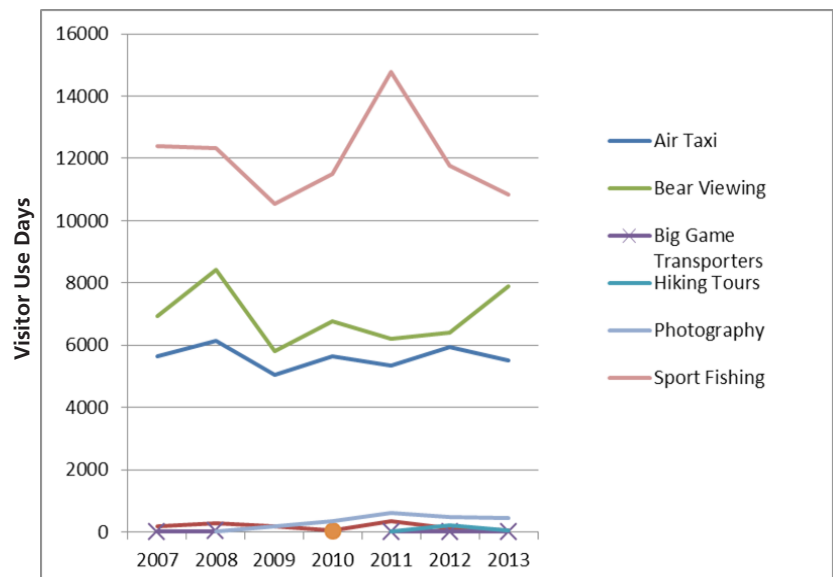


Figure 4. The number of visitors and the main activity for the visitors as reported by the Commercial operators working in Katmai NPP from 2007 through 2013. Sport Fishing, Bear Viewing and Air Taxi continue to dominate reported activities in Katmai. Data from the Katmai National Park & Preserve CUA database 03/20/14.